

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the distinguished gentleman from California [Mr. ROYCE], the chairman of our Subcommittee on Africa, for introducing this resolution and for his outstanding leadership on this very difficult issue. The purpose of this resolution is to highlight the significant efforts of former Secretary of State James Baker in advancing a peaceful solution to the question of Western Sahara. Due to the leadership by the gentleman from California [Mr. ROYCE], this resolution has moved forward in a consensus manner. We have worked closely with both sides on the Western Sahara question and with Secretary Baker and all parties find that the resolution is agreeable.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I urge our Members to support this excellent resolution.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. Payne], a member of the Subcommittee on Africa.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, let me first commend the gentleman from California [Mr. ROYCE], the chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, and the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. MENENDEZ], the ranking member, for the outstanding work that they have done on this resolution. The Western Sahara has been a point of contention for some time now. The final outcome for this former Spanish colony will be historic and a momentous occasion. It will set a precedent for many other issues of self-determination throughout the world, such as Cyprus and Northern Ireland. This is a major accomplishment. We should commend the former Secretary of State James Baker, the Polisario Front and representatives of Morocco for coming to the table to decide on a referendum on the future of this disputed territory. The referendum originally scheduled for January 1992 is to decide whether Western Sahara should be incorporated into Morocco or become an independent nation as many of the Sahrawi people have fought for for many years. I am glad to see the culmination of the identification process which first started in 1984. I also want to congratulate the Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan for his role in urging negotiations in this region. Let me say that I think that now the playing field has been leveled, where all will have access to the media, to the press, and that international observers will be able to participate in the proceedings. All of these very important issues have been worked out. This is a step in the right direction.

As we see democracy spreading throughout the continent of Africa, where only a few countries are left in dispute at this time, I think that it is good to see another nation coming to the front where the question which has long besieged them and has been a problem may be finally worked out. Once again I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. In closing, let me commend the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. MENENDEZ], the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Africa, who has worked with us on this resolution. We have worked together on several measures throughout the year. I would also like to commend Special Envoy James Baker for his work. Morocco is a long-time ally and the United States has been improving relations with Algeria, which supports the Polisario Front.

The issue of self-determination for Western Sahara poses a danger of instability for the northwest African region. The issue must be resolved so that the likelihood of long-term problems there is diminished. Peace in Western Sahara will allow for economic development and democratization in the region and could be a beneficial example for other nations in North Africa and the Middle East. That is the purpose of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to adopt the resolution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAZIO of New York). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California [Mr. ROYCE] that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, House Resolution 245, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FURTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A further message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with amendments in which the concurrence of the House is requested, A bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 2607. An act making appropriations for the government of the District of Columbia and other activities chargeable in whole or in part against the revenues of said District for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes.

The message also announced, that the Senate insists upon its amendments to the bill (H.R. 2607) "An Act making appropriations for the government of the District of Columbia and other activities chargeable in whole or in part against the revenues of said District for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for the purposes.", requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints Mr. STEVENS, Mr. SPECTER, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. McCONNELL, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. GREGG, Mr. BENNETT, Mr. CAMPBELL, Mr. FAIRCLOTH, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. BYRD, Mr. INOUE, Mr. HOLLINGS, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. BUMPERS, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. HARKIN, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mrs. MURRAY, and Mrs. BOXER, to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

EXPRESSING CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 156) expressing concern for the continued deterioration of human rights in Afghanistan and emphasizing the need for a peaceful political settlement in that country, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 156

Whereas Congress recognizes that the legacy of civil conflict in Afghanistan during the last 17 years has had a devastating effect on the civilian population in that country, killing 2,000,000 people and displacing more than 7,000,000, and has had a particularly negative impact on the rights and security of women and girls;

Whereas the Department of State's Country Reports on Human Practices for 1996 states: "Serious human rights violations continue to occur [. . .] political killings, torture, rape, arbitrary detention, looting, abductions and kidnappings for ransom were committed by armed units, local commanders and rogue individuals.";

Whereas the Afghan combatants are responsible for numerous abhorrent human rights abuses, including the rape, sexual abuse, torture, abduction, and persecution of women and girls;

Whereas drug proliferation has increased in Afghanistan;

Whereas Congress is disturbed by the upsurge of reported human rights abuses in Afghanistan, including extreme restrictions placed on women and girls;

Whereas safe haven has been provided to suspected terrorists and terrorist camps may be allowed to operate in Afghanistan;

Whereas Afghanistan is a sovereign nation and must work to solve its internal disputes; and

Whereas Afghanistan and the United States recognize international human rights conventions, such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which espouse respect for basic human rights of all individuals without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, or gender: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring),

SECTION 1. DECLARATION OF POLICY.

The Congress hereby—

(1) deplores the violations of international humanitarian law in Afghanistan and raises concern over the reported cases of stoning, public executions, and street beatings;

(2) condemns the targeted discrimination against women and girls and expresses deep concern regarding the prohibition of employment and education for women and girls;

(3) urges the Taliban and all other parties in Afghanistan to cease providing safe haven to suspected terrorists or permitting Afghan territory to be used for terrorist training; and

(4) takes note of the continued armed conflict in Afghanistan, affirms the need for peace negotiations and expresses hope that the Afghan parties will agree to a cease-fire throughout the country.

SEC. 2. SENSE OF THE CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that the President—

(1) should continue to monitor the human rights situation in Afghanistan and should call for adherence by all factions in Afghanistan to international humanitarian law;

(2) should call for an end to the systematic discrimination and harassment of women and girls in Afghanistan;

(3) should encourage efforts to procure a durable peace in Afghanistan and should support the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy Secretary General Lakhdar

Brahimi to assist in brokering a peaceful resolution to years of conflict;

(4) should call upon all countries with influence to use their influence on the contending factions to end the fighting and come to the negotiating table, abide by internationally recognized norms of behavior, cease human rights violations, end provision of safe haven to terrorists and close terrorist training camps, and reverse discriminatory policies against women and girls;

(5) should call upon all nations to cease providing financial assistance, arms, and other kinds of support to the militaries or political organizations of any factions in Afghanistan; and

(6) should support efforts by Afghan individuals to establish a cessation of hostilities and a transitional multiparty government leading to freedom, respect for human rights, and free and fair elections.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California [Mr. ROHRABACHER] and the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. LUTHER] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California [Mr. ROHRABACHER].

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN], the chairman of the Committee on International Relations and someone who has given us great inspiration to stand up for the higher ideals that America stands for.

(Mr. GILMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the sponsors of this resolution, the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BEREUTER], the gentleman from California [Mr. BERMAN], the gentleman from California [Mr. ROHRABACHER], and especially the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. MALONEY] for her excellent work in crafting this proposal.

The deterioration of human rights in Afghanistan, especially its impact on women, is very distressing. Large areas of Afghanistan that are now under the Taliban rule are being run by men whose thinking is medieval. Regrettably, the State Department has done little to end the fighting that has led to the current problems in Afghanistan.

Two weeks ago, the gentleman from California [Mr. ROHRABACHER] did what the State Department could not or cared not to do. He brought together in Istanbul almost all of the leaders in the different Afghan groups so that some sort of a national reconciliation process could begin. The gentleman from California then arranged for them to come to Washington so that our Committee on International Relations could meet with them to learn firsthand about that historic productive meeting.

House Concurrent Resolution 156 will assist us in the peace process. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution. I want to commend the gentleman from California [Mr. ROHRABACHER] for his continuing ef-

forts in trying to bring peace to Afghanistan.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, more than a million Afghans died and 5 million became refugees during the battle that was a turning point in the Cold War. They brought down the Soviet empire. Their courage and sacrifice reaped a harvest of peace and plenty for the Western world. However, in Afghanistan, the war never ended. The social and political fabric of that ancient culture remains in chaos. People today in Afghanistan are dying from both violence and starvation. House Concurrent Resolution 156 introduced by the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. MALONEY] urges the President to, No. 1, monitor and condemn ongoing violations of human rights caused by the fanatical Taliban movement who controls about two-thirds of the country as well as abuses by the other factions and other militias. It especially calls attention to the brutal and systematic discrimination that the Taliban have imposed on women and children in Afghanistan.

In addition, this bill requests that the President should call upon the government of Pakistan to suspend military and political support of the Taliban and to use its influence with the Taliban to end the abuses that we have been describing tonight. It urges the President to support international efforts intended to create a peaceful resolution to the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan that would ultimately include free and fair elections and the return of human and civil rights for all the people of Afghanistan. Stability in Afghanistan is the key to peace and prosperity in Central Asia. The extremists of the Taliban movement are responsible for the ongoing suffering of the Afghan people, and they pose a great threat of fundamentalist violence in neighboring countries, especially in Pakistan, and their extremism permits Iran to have a greater role in the region.

The Taliban currently provides a haven for terrorists such as Ben Ladin of Saudi Arabia, and the training of terrorist organizations now operating in Egypt, the Balkans and the Philippines. According to both the United Nations and the United States Drug Enforcement Agency, they have turned Afghanistan into the world's leading opium producer. The Taliban's war effort is funded by opium profits. According to the United States and international sources, almost all the opium production and processing being conducted in Afghanistan is in the provinces controlled by the Taliban, especially near their stronghold in Kandahar. According to the United Nations Drug Control Program, in 1997, Afghanistan produced a record 3,000 tons of opium. That is a 25 percent increase over the 1996 production. In 1996, the Taliban imposed 10 percent tax on all opium produced in Afghanistan

which, according to experts of the United States Drug Enforcement Agency and the CIA, amounts to at least \$100 million. That is drug money that they are making which comes straight from the drug producers to the pockets of the Taliban.

During the last 10 years, I have had extensive discussions with all factions of Afghanistan as well as ordinary Afghan citizens. Although not spelled out in this legislation before us, I believe it is time for this administration to support recent resolutions by Afghans of all ethnic groups that emphasize that the key to ending the conflict in Afghanistan is the return of King Zahir Shah. As the symbolic head of an interim government, Zahir Shah could remake civil government, form a coalition government of national unity which would represent all factions. This reconciliation government would be responsible to prepare national democratic elections in which the people of Afghanistan would choose their own leaders and democracy.

I can assure my colleagues tonight the people of Afghanistan are not fanatics, but they are devout in their religious faith. Most Muslims are embarrassed by the Taliban. But if we would help the true believers in Islam in Afghanistan regain a democratic government, it would lead to peace and it would lead to a restoration of human rights. King Zahir Shah offers that alternative.

Although it is not in this resolution, we hope that the President would follow through and do what he can to bring peace and democracy, which are synonymous in Afghanistan.

House Concurrent resolution 156 urges the President to support the internal Afghan peace process. It is especially timely, as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will be departing for South Asia next week, that she express a new administration policy that would compel all neighboring countries involved in supporting the Taliban to immediately stop.

Mr. Speaker, we owe a tremendous debt to the people of Afghanistan. It was not our mighty armies in Europe that stopped the Soviet empire from expanding. It was not our missiles, it was not the great expenditure of defense. Yes, they were necessary at the time in order to deter war with the Soviet empire. But it was a group of Muslims on the plains of Afghanistan that courageously stood up and said, you will not impose your atheistic system on us, you will not dominate our country, and with great courage and dying in the hundreds of thousands stood firm against Soviet aggression and broke the will of the Soviet bosses to conquer the world. We owe a great deal to these heroic people. It is sad and tragic that fanatics have taken over their country. It is time for the United States to reach out and do what we can to promote democracy and human rights in Afghanistan. We owe it to them not to forget them. If we do, if we

forget the chaos that continues and the bloodshed and we refuse to pay our debt to the people of Afghanistan, in the end it will come back and hurt us. There will be no stability in Central Asia as long as the chaos and killing continues in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LUTHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. MALONEY], the original sponsor of the resolution.

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Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding this time to me, and I thank the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN] for bringing this legislation forward under the suspension calendar, and I thank the gentleman from California [Mr. ROHRABACHER] for his leadership not only on this legislation, but really his ongoing efforts for many years to bring peace and democracy to Afghanistan.

A woman living in Afghanistan may not work, attend school, be photographed or appear in public without a garment covering their entire body. They must wear a mesh mask over their eyes, they must not speak directly to a man. Certainly there is no possibility of a woman speaking out against these human rights abuses in a public forum as I am now.

That is why we must speak for them, and that is why we must pass this resolution which condemns the continued deterioration of women's rights in that country.

More than a year ago the Taliban, a fundamentalist Islamic militia group, overthrew the government of Afghanistan. Women and young girls have borne the brunt of that takeover. The Taliban has not just stripped women of their human rights, they have made women targets for criminal abuse.

Just 2 months ago a 16-year-old girl was stoned to death because she was traveling with a man who was not a member of her family. Just last week one of my constituents, who is a refugee from Afghanistan, told me that her 13-year-old niece was shot dead in the street for going to school. Women are routinely raped and abused. They are persecuted for the smallest infraction; for example, allowing their ankles to be exposed or appearing in a photograph.

Women cannot receive proper emergency medical care. I read recently of the case of one woman who had been severely burned. She was refused treatment because it was against the Taliban law for her to remove her clothing for treatment.

Women are not permitted to work. At one time women made up a large part of the work force. Now many hospitals and schools are closed for lack of employees. The war in Afghanistan has left many women widows. If they cannot work, how are they to support

themselves and their children? Many are starving to death.

Perhaps the abuse that makes me the most sad is the idea that young girls, young women, are not permitted to go to school. What does it say about the future of this country? How can women recover from years of abuse and forced ignorance?

I urge my colleagues to vote for House Resolution 156. We must speak out for these women who are being so horribly abused because they cannot speak out for themselves.

I would also like to add my words of encouragement to Madeleine Albright, who will be traveling to this region and encouraging other surrounding countries to speak out against the Taliban.

Mr. LUTHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I support this resolution, and I urge its speedy adoption this evening.

This resolution represents a constructive effort to deal with a very serious problem. Afghanistan and its people have suffered through foreign invasions, civil war and widespread human rights abuses virtually nonstop for nearly 20 years. Today outrageous human rights violations continue to occur, especially against the women and girls of that country. We in America must take every opportunity we have to deal with that and to put an end to those abuses of human dignity and international law.

The Afghan people who so courageously fought a key battle or conflict in the Cold War deserve to live a life of peace without the kind of abuse that is occurring today. I therefore urge the Members of this body to support this resolution which simply restates the simple truth of what is occurring there today and makes us and our country stand with the people against these abuses.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the remainder of my time.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this measure.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAZIO of New York). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. ROHRABACHER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Finally in closing, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that we have this resolution tonight, and I would hope that those governments in Central Asia and around Afghanistan focus on what we are trying to do in the United States tonight. Tonight we are taking the first steps towards re-involving ourselves in a part of the world that the United States walked away from 10 years ago.

When the Soviet Union was finally defeated in Afghanistan and the last Soviet tanks went across the bridge back into what was then the Soviet Union, the United States breathed a sigh of relief, and we believed that the fighting there would be over very quickly and shortly. Instead, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, the war in Afghanistan which brought peace and prosperity to the Western world, continues in Afghanistan. Today we spend \$100 billion a year less on defense because these scraggly, ill-equipped, brave and courageous men in Afghanistan stood up to Soviet tanks and air power, and because they did, the Soviet role to keep control of what they held in the Soviet empire and to expand that empire was broken.

Yes, today we are able to spend those hundreds of billions of dollars, hundreds of billions of dollars that we are not spending on defense, we are able to bring that out of our deficit spending. We are able to spend that on education, we are able to spend that on making our own lives, an infrastructure, making the lives of our country better so that our children live better lives.

But what has happened in Afghanistan during that time period as we have enjoyed this era of goodwill in the United States? What has happened there, as the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. MALONEY] has suggested, a horrible darkness of oppression has come down on half of their population. Women in Afghanistan are oppressed and treated just as, and I hate to use this example, but the fact is the Taliban are to the women of Afghanistan and the women of the world what Hitler was to the Jews of the world in the 1930's. The Taliban and their philosophy would rally people to repress women and children in their society. We heard examples of that tonight.

What else is happening in Afghanistan? Every day a child, if not many children, are blown to bits, their legs are blown off because of landmines that are planted by the millions, and many of those landmines came from the United States of America. Many of them were given by us to the various factions during the war to defeat the Russians. But yet those children are still being blown apart, and chaos still rules the day.

In Afghanistan the Taliban militias still fight northern power groups that do not agree with their brand of Islam and refuse to be dominated by a Pushtu versus a Tajik, and the killing goes on and on. It goes on for one reason, because we in the United States, the new superpower that supposedly is going to be the force for power and good in this world, have totally walked away from these people to whom we owe so much, people who permitted us to be spending tens of billions of dollars on our education rather than on defense, people who helped bring down the Soviet empire, thus making it no longer necessary for us to spend money on missiles so we could spend it instead on

health care and education and infrastructure and bringing down our level of deficit spending.

This resolution tonight underscores that America will no longer close our eyes, that this Congress is no longer closing its eyes to the repression of women and children in Afghanistan, the killing and the maiming of children in Afghanistan, the ongoing chaos.

No. 1, that is the moral position to take, and that is what this resolution says; but, No. 2, let us remember the practical end of it. And I found a funny thing in my years in public service: When we do something, when we ignore the moral course of action, we also are going down a road of something that is not practical. There is a relationship between a practical policy and a moral policy. If we walk away from these people and let them fend for themselves with this brutality and tyranny, with maiming of their children and the repression of their women, what will happen? The chaos will continue in Afghanistan, and I can assure all of my friends here today, all of my friends here today, that Central Asia, which should become an intricate part of the economic system of the world will eventually be engulfed in that same chaos.

Pakistan, who has been a pillar, a pillar of stability in South Asia, our friend will go under, because if we permit the fanaticism of the Taliban to go on, it will bring down Pakistan just as billions of dollars of drug money going into the hands of narcoterrorists in Afghanistan, in a chaotic Afghanistan, will eventually wreak havoc in the United States. It has already caused the lives of American servicemen and people to be lost. A terrorist trained in Afghanistan helped blow up a building which housed our military people in Saudi Arabia. There was an assassination attempt on the Pope. They found out that the terrorist who was going to assassinate the Pope was trained in Afghanistan.

We cannot let this go on, because not only is it immoral to let this go on, but practically speaking, if we do it, it will come back and hurt us.

There are many ways that we can try to reach peace. Having been involved in this process, I believe King Zahir Shah, the king in exile, who is a moderate leader of his people, a moderate Muslim leader, a devout Muslim, but not a fanatic, will bring back sanity to his country. Zahir Shah has pledged to his people to restore civil government, rebuild the infrastructure and create the basis for democratic elections. And in democratic elections I believe the courage and the honor of the Afghan people will come out over the fanaticism of the Taliban. I have no doubt about that.

And I would like to close with a short story. Many people in this body do not know right after I was elected what I did. Many of my friends and colleagues after they got elected the very first

time took off and went golfing or went swimming or went hiking and just got away from it all because the first election is usually the hardest election for this body. I made a pledge to my friends in Afghanistan, because I worked with them when I worked in the White House, that when I left, when I left the White House, if I had a chance and if the battle in Afghanistan was still going on, that I would join them in their struggle.

So I had 2 months between the time that I was elected and the time that I would be sworn in as a Congressman, and I knew that that was the only time that I would be free again like that for the rest of my life, or at least the rest of my time when I would be elected in Congress. So I disappeared, and I ended up with a mujahedin unit in Afghanistan fighting in the battle of Jalalabad, which was then under siege. And as I hiked toward this battle, which was one of the most strenuous hikes, I might add, that I have ever made in my entire life, and it was just beyond any endurance that I could ever do today, but a young Afghan boy, it was a full moon, and the artillery shells were exploding in the distance and lighting up the skies, and it was about 15 mujahedin with me armed with AK-47s and RPGs, just lightly armed, and a young boy who was probably 17 years old ran up besides me, AK-47 slung over his shoulder, and said, "You come from America."

And I said, "Yes."

He said, "You are in politics in America."

And I said, "Yes, I am."

He said, "Are you a donkey or an elephant?"

Here is a young man, 17 years old, fighting for his country, fighting for our country, fighting for the people of the West, fighting for his religion, a brave and courageous young man, and I said "What do you want to do when this is all over?"

□ 2115

He says "I want to build things. I would like to be an architect."

I do not know if that young man survived the battle. I do not know if he did or not. But I know if he is given his chance, he will rebuild his country. I know he is a brave and courageous young person who believed so much in the United States that he knew the symbols of our political structure. He wanted democracy for his own country, but when the Soviets were defeated, we walked away.

Let us reestablish this commitment to the Afghan people, at the very least, to reach out and provide some leadership, to help them attain their own democracy, and, if they obtain democracy, perhaps through some support and guidance from their former king, it will be just as their struggle against communism, a benefit to us as well.

So tonight that is what this resolution is all about. I would ask my colleagues to join me in taking this moral

stand and repaying this sacred debt to the people of Afghanistan.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAZIO of New York). All time has expired.

The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California [Mr. ROHRBACHER] that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 156, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended, and the concurrent resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SAVINGS ARE VITAL TO EVERYONE'S RETIREMENT ACT OF 1997

Mr. FAWELL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill (H.R. 1377) to amend title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to encourage retirement income savings.

The Clerk read as follows:

Senate amendment:

Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Savings Are Vital to Everyone's Retirement Act of 1997".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds as follows:

(1) The impending retirement of the baby boom generation will severely strain our already overburdened entitlement system, necessitating increased reliance on pension and other personal savings.

(2) Studies have found that less than a third of Americans have even tried to calculate how much they will need to have saved by retirement, and that less than 20 percent are very confident they will have enough money to live comfortably throughout their retirement.

(3) A leading obstacle to expanding retirement savings is the simple fact that far too many Americans—particularly the young—are either unaware of, or without the knowledge and resources necessary to take advantage of, the extensive benefits offered by our retirement savings system.

(b) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this Act—

(1) to advance the public's knowledge and understanding of retirement savings and its critical importance to the future well-being of American workers and their families;

(2) to provide for a periodic, bipartisan national retirement savings summit in conjunction with the White House to elevate the issue of savings to national prominence; and

(3) to initiate the development of a broad-based, public education program to encourage and enhance individual commitment to a personal retirement savings strategy.

SEC. 3. OUTREACH BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Part 5 of subtitle B of title I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (29 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"OUTREACH TO PROMOTE RETIREMENT INCOME SAVINGS

"SEC. 516. (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall maintain an ongoing program of outreach to the public designed to effectively promote retirement income savings by the public.

"(b) METHODS.—The Secretary shall carry out the requirements of subsection (a) by means